Strategic Plan Framework

Cowichan Youth Services Gap Analysis

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Introduction

The youth services sector in the Cowichan region will need a strategic plan to move forward the work of addressing gaps identified by the Youth Services Gap Analysis. A strategic plan will help focus energy within the sector, and assign tasks to ensure they receive attention.

A Strategic Plan Framework lists the items to be addressed in a strategic plan, but it does not include information about specific timeframes, does not assign responsibility or priority, and does not show linkages between the tasks, i.e. which needs to come first. The framework is provided as a discussion starter for the Youth Table being established as a first step by Our Cowichan Community Health Network.

In working with this framework, it is important to remember that the elements listed below, for the most part, already exist within the region and that there is a foundation to build upon. However, at this time, the provision of services is fragmented, with limited reach due to factors including limited capacity within organizations or geographic or other specificity in the programming.

> *We need to organize the sector in a way that kids feel like "we've got their backs" when they need help.*

Key Tasks Arising from the Cowichan Youth Gap Analysis:

1. Formation of a Youth Table, designed to maintain intentional communications across the sector and promote collaboration, founded on the principles of collective impact. Our Cowichan Community Health Network is uniquely situated to house this table, which it is already doing to support work with seniors, the Community Action Team, and the healthcare sector more broadly within the Cowichan region. Key tasks for the Youth Table would include:
   a. Host annual meetings similar to the recent youth sector workshop, to promote connection and cohesion within the sector.
   b. Build bridges between the institutional players (Ministry of Child and Family Development, Island Health, Cowichan hospital, School District 79), First Nations health centres and youth programs (Malahat, Qu'wutsun, Stz'uminus), local government departments including community safety and recreation, and the non-profit organizations (CVYS, CMHA-Cowichan, CWAV and Ravensnest, Clements Centre, Hiiye'yu Lelum, LRCA, LCCSSS, and others). This may require both a cultural shift and community buy-in.

c. Organize information fairs to promote youth services, so that youth, their parents, and services providers can know about resources available in their community, particularly since this environment is changing rapidly over time.
   d. Advocate for needed services within the region, including the development of more flexible systems to meet the developmental needs of youth and families, i.e. reduce the gaps created by the contractual "hard lines" that determine eligibility for services
   e. Help to monitor and maintain the health of the people working in the sector, so that the workers are able to continue to provide services to youth[1]
2. Establish a Youth Advisory Group to assist the sector with understanding youth needs. "Nothing about us without us." Key considerations for the youth advisory group:
   a. Consider the model used by Kw'umut Lelum for their youth advisory group.
   b. Consider the model used by the CAT team for peers.
   c. Be linked to a supportive not-for-profit organization, to serve as a backbone organization[2] for the Youth Advisors
   d. Ensure cultural supports for members of the advisory group.
   e. Create a positive working atmosphere for participants.
   f. Recognize the economic needs of the youth serving on the advisory group.
3. Initiate discussion and action aimed at the successful recruitment of a child and youth psychiatrist to serve the needs of the region, and to ensure this position is "nested" within a supportive network. This may include:
   - Establishing a Foundry or related type of holistic, integrated care organization, OR
   - Cobbling together a group of services that can attract a psychiatrist to the region, that includes access to medical supports, counsellors, peer supports, cultural supports, and other services
4. Systematically address key gaps and issues as identified by the Cowichan Youth Gap Analysis including:
   a. Parental supports
   b. Upstream (early) interventions
   c. Community safety
   d. Sector complexity – make services easier to access by youth, by parents, and by care providers
   e. Gendered service provision

For full details on the key gaps and issues see the Cowichan Region Youth Services Gap Analysis Report.

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[1] Workers in the sector, including teachers and counsellors, are burning out because the need is so great and the tools available are so limited. Reducing isolation can go a long way towards supporting these workers.
[2] A backbone organization does not to work one-on-one with individuals or organizations, but provides the supports to create a broader understanding of what a community needs and provides capacity to address those needs in the community. This concept is linked to the Collective Impact approach.